Amendments to the Specification:

Please amend the Specification as follows:

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 3 at line 21, and extending to page 3, line 23, as follows:

-- FIGURE 5 is an enlarged, top elevational partial view of the rail of FIGURE 1; ~~and~~

FIGURE 6 is an enlarged, side cross-sectional view of a portion of the rail taken along line 6-6 ~~A-A~~ of FIGURE 5; and

FIGURE 7 is an enlarged, partial isometric view of a rail having conically-shaped apertures in accordance with an alternate embodiment of the invention. --

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 3 at line 26, and extending to page 3, line 31, as follows:

-- The present invention relates to methods and apparatus for track members having a neutral axis rack. Many specific details of certain embodiments of the invention are set forth in the following description and in FIGURES 1-7~~6~~ to provide a thorough understanding of such embodiments. One skilled in the art, however, will understand that the present invention may have additional embodiments, or that the present invention may be practiced without several of the details described in the following description. --

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 5 at line 33, and extending to page 6, line 11, as follows:

-- FIGURE 6 is an enlarged, side cross-sectional view of a portion of the rail 112a taken along line 6-6 ~~A-A~~ of FIGURE 5. As shown in FIGURE 6, in this embodiment, the

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apertures 188 are tapered along the stiff axis 182 (FIGURE 6) such that the apertures 188 are wider at a top surface 187 of the rail 112a and narrower at a bottom surface 189 of the rail 112a. In one aspect, the apertures 188 are tapered in a wedge-shaped (or two-dimensional) manner. In an alternate aspect, the apertures 188 are at least partially conically (or three-dimensionally) shaped. For example, FIGURE 7 shows a rail 212 having conically-shaped apertures 288 distributed along a neutral axis 286 in accordance with an alternate embodiment of the invention. As further shown in FIGURE 6, the apertures 188 may be tapered to closely match the profile of the teeth 135 of the drive gear 132. In one particular embodiment, the thickness of the rail 112 is equal to the length of the tooth 135 of the drive gear 132 (FIGURE 6). Because the pitch line of the rack 180 at least approximately coincides with the neutral axis 186, the rack 180 remains aligned along the neutral axis 186 during bending and flexing of the rail 112a over the workpiece 102. Thus, the teeth 135 of the drive gear 132 may remain more positively engaged with the rack 180 as the carriage assembly 120 is driven over the track assembly 110, even when the rails 112 are twisted and flexed over contoured surfaces. --

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 6 at line 31, and extending to page 7, line 10, as follows:

-- With continued reference to FIGURES 1 and 2, in this embodiment, the opposing-force support assembly 160 includes a clamp-up actuator 162 having a clamp-up pin 164 that is engageable with the workpiece 102. A first (or y-axis) actuator 166 is coupled to the clamp-up actuator 162 and to a first baseplate 168, and is extendible along the y-axis. The first baseplate 168 is slideably coupled to a second baseplate 172, permitting the first baseplate 168 to be translated along the x-axis. Similarly, the second baseplate 172 ~~170~~ is slideably coupled to the x-axis carriage 122, permitting the second baseplate 172 ~~170~~ to be translated along the z-axis. A second (or x-axis) actuator 176 is coupled between the first baseplate 168 and the second

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baseplate 172, and is extendible along the x-axis. A third (or z-axis) actuator 178 is coupled between the second baseplate 172 and to the x-axis carriage 122, and is extendible along the z-axis. The first, second, and third actuators 166, 176, 178 may be operatively coupled to the controller 134. Thus, the first, second, and third actuators 166, 176, 178 may be used to controllably position the clamp-up pin 164 of the opposing-force support assembly 160 at a desired location along the y-axis, the x-axis, and the z-axis, respectively. --

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